



Evaluation of the EU Youth Strategy and the Council Recommendation on the mobility of young volunteers

ASSESSMENT OF FINAL EVALUATION REPORT

Evaluator: ICF International

Assessment carried out by:

The Evaluation Team of DG EAC (Unit A4)

Context

Purpose of this document: This document must be established for all interim and ex-post evaluations in the Directorate-General for Education and Culture (DG EAC) to provide an objective overall assessment of the evaluation and the validity of its results, as well as a general description of how the evaluation results will be used by DG EAC.

The document shall be published together with the Evaluation Report on Europa:
http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/evalreports/index_en.htm

Definitions: Evaluation in the Commission is defined as "an evidence-based judgement of the extent to which an intervention has 1) been effective and efficient, 2) been relevant given the needs and its objectives, 3) been coherent both internally and with other EU policy interventions, and 4) achieved EU added-value". It is a tool to help the Commission assess the actual performance of EU interventions compared to initial expectations. Information about the evaluation framework of the European Commission can be obtained at:
http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/secretariat_general/evaluation/index_en.htm

Organisation of the evaluation process: In DG EAC evaluations must be independent and shall be led and carried out by external resources. The operational management of the EAC policy areas is responsible for the identification of evaluation subjects, the organisation of evaluations, and the follow-up of evaluation results. A central Evaluation Team, detached from the operational activities evaluated, has as a major role in ensuring quality, objectivity and an element of independence to the process, by having a close involvement in all steps of the evaluation. An evaluation Steering Group is appointed to prepare the evaluation, supervise the execution, and support the evaluator on the basis of the members' specific knowledge and expertise of the evaluation subject.

Basic data about the specific evaluation

Evaluation: Evaluation of the EU Youth Strategy and the Council Recommendation on the mobility of young volunteers across the EU

Purpose of the evaluation: To identify ways of improving the implementation and governance of the EU Youth cooperation framework for the period 2016-2018 and also inform the renewal of the Youth Strategy in the post 2018 period.

Evaluator: ICF International

Budget of the evaluation: 175,000 EUR

Time period of execution: 24.03.2015-08.04.2016

Assessment

Carried out by: The Evaluation Team of DG EAC (Unit A4)

Date: 12.04.2016

1. Evaluation subject

The EU Youth Strategy (EUYS) is the framework for European cooperation in the youth field for 2010-2018. Its legal basis lies in a Council Resolution of November 2009. The Strategy is set to improve the situation of young people in Europe by creating more and equal opportunities for them in education and the labour market and by promoting their active citizenship, social inclusion and solidarity. To achieve this, the Strategy seeks to develop a transversal approach to youth issues. Since volunteering is one of the areas covered by the Strategy, the implementation of the Council Recommendation on the Mobility of Young Volunteers across the EU, adopted in 2008, was included under the EU Youth Strategy.

This is the first external evaluation of both initiatives since their launch. Until this external evaluation, the monitoring of progress in the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy was undertaken internally, through reporting from Member States and key stakeholders resulting in the Joint EU Youth Reports of 2012 and 2015.

2. Scope of evaluation

The evaluation covers the period 2010-2014/5.

3. Methodology applied for the evaluation

The evaluation method was based on a mix of data collection and analysis activities and tools: desk research, mapping of activities and outputs at EU and national level, 151 in-depth interviews, two online surveys and ten case studies. The mix of methods allowed the evaluation team to collect evidence from various stakeholder groups and sources. It then allowed for the triangulation of data.

Some challenges to data collection were encountered (e.g. quality and quantity of data from National Youth Reports, availability of interviewees and their variable level of knowledge of the EU Youth Strategy, difficulty of quantifying the outcomes of the EUYS, etc.), nevertheless these have not resulted in major obstacles to the quality of the evaluation. Although the geographical distribution of survey respondents varies across the EU countries, this did not create a major bias in responses. It has been difficult to isolate findings related to the effect of the Recommendation from those related to the influence of the Strategy.

4. Results of the evaluation

The EU Youth Strategy has been overall relevant to young people and youth policy-makers in all Member States. It could be made more relevant by focusing on a smaller number of clearly defined objectives, better involving local and regional youth policy-makers and improving the coordination of the youth agenda at EU level.

The Strategy was successful in triggering changes at national and organisational level and the adoption of common approaches and principles across the Member States. However, it could be more influential if better known and understood by key stakeholders.

Structured dialogue and the mobilisation of EU funds proved to be the most influential instruments. There is a need to align the use of cooperation instruments with the Strategy's objectives more clearly and strategically.

The main obstacles to efficiency of EU Youth cooperation are related to limited resources at national level and inefficiencies of certain instruments or activities (expert groups, the exercise for the progress reporting, etc.). Setting up a more efficient monitoring framework is recommended so as to better capture the achievements of the EU Youth Strategy.

There is sustained interest among the Member States in continuing cooperation on youth issues at EU level.

5. Follow-up of the evaluation results

The external evaluation will be followed shortly by a public consultation, and then, in Q4 of 2016, a specific Staff Working Document will summarise and present the final results of the evaluation process. An Action Plan to address the evaluation recommendations will be developed as well. The evaluation findings will be used as input for improving the current framework until 2018 and to inform the design of a future EU youth policy after that year.

6. Conclusions of the assessment of the Evaluation Report

The evaluation provides a true and complete picture of the results of the intervention. The analytical framework is sound, and the conclusions are supported by the existing evidence.